

England's Youth Mental Health Crisis: 1 in 4 Affected as Rates Soar
(New NHS Data)

Mental Health Conditions, NHS Survey Reveals Alarming Rise

New data highlights a significant surge in anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders across all age groups in England, with young women disproportionately affected by the escalating crisis.

By Anna Bawden

A recent [NHS survey](#) has painted a stark picture of the nation's [mental health](#), revealing that a staggering **one in four young people in England** are now grappling with a common mental health condition. This marks a significant escalation, with rates among 16- to 24-year-olds climbing by over a third in just a decade, from 18.9% in 2014 to 25.8% in 2024. The study, part of the adult psychiatric morbidity survey, also found that young women are notably more affected than young men, with 36.1% of women reporting such conditions compared to 16.3% of men. Common mental health conditions encompass a range of issues, [including anxiety](#), depression, panic disorder, phobias, and obsessive-compulsive disorder.



Sally McManus, a lead researcher on the survey, attributed these alarming figures to global trends that are disproportionately

impacting younger generations. "Young people are growing up worried about many aspects of their lives, from insecure employment and housing to [Covid and climate change](#)," she noted, adding that the pandemic likely had a profound effect on the mental health of this group.

Widespread Deterioration Across Age Groups

The survey's findings extend beyond young people, indicating a sharp increase in [mental ill health](#), suicidal thoughts, and self-harm across the adult population.

More than a fifth (**22.6%**) of adults aged 16 to 64 now experience a common mental health condition, an increase from 18.9% in 2014.



Over one in four adults (**25.2%**) reported having had suicidal thoughts at some point in their lives. This figure rises to approximately one-third among 16- to 24-year-olds (31.5%) and 25- to 34-year-olds (32.9%).

Self-harm rates have quadrupled since 2000, escalating from 6.4% in 2014 to 10.3% in 2024. The highest rates are observed in the 16- to 24-year-old demographic at 24.6%, with [young women experiencing](#) the highest prevalence at 31.7%.

McManus reiterated that this upward trend is broadly evident, with [young women](#) facing the highest rates of self-harm and suicidal ideation. She also clarified that the figures do not suggest over-

reporting due to increased awareness but rather address potential historical under-reporting.

Treatment Gap and Systemic Strain

Despite the rise in mental health conditions, the study also indicates that more individuals are seeking and receiving treatment. Nearly half (**47%**) of 16- to 74-year-olds with common mental health issues are now undergoing therapy or medication, an increase from previous surveys. However, a significant treatment gap persists, with **over half of those with common mental health conditions still not receiving the help they need**. Furthermore, the survey found that most people affected by gambling harms have never received specific treatment or support for it.



Mental health charity leaders have voiced grave concerns over the findings. Marjorie Wallace, Chief Executive of Sane, described the report as exposing "the huge scale of need facing a system that is already in breakdown, particularly involving the services available to young people." Dr. Sarah Hughes, Chief Executive of Mind, added that "The nation's mental health is deteriorating, and our current system is overwhelmed, underfunded, and unequal to the scale of the challenge." She attributed the suffering, particularly among the young, to the trauma of the pandemic, the relentless cost of living crisis, and persistent racial inequalities.



In response, Health Secretary Wes Streeting is set to announce that mental health patients will soon be able to self-refer for talking therapies via the NHS app, aiming to create "digital front doors on mental health services." He also confirmed plans for 85 new [mental health emergency](#) departments across England.

Claire Murdoch, NHS England's national director for mental health, acknowledged the profound impact of poor mental health on personal lives, employment, and physical well-being. She expressed satisfaction with the expansion and digital transformation of services while also stressing the ongoing need for increased access to care and a broader societal shift in tackling mental health. Dr. Lade Smith, president of the [Royal College of Psychiatrists](#), called for "urgent and sustained investment in the mental health workforce and infrastructure" to meet the clear and rising demand with compassion, speed, and fairness.